



Keeping Our Families and Communities Healthy

The newsletter for Redirected State Staff working for the California Connected COVID-19 Contact Tracing Program

A Message from Holly Howard

It's hard to believe it's already May. Our state is opening up more and more. Some people have returned to working on-site and most schools are either fully open or have opened at least partially using a hybrid of distance and on-site learning. At a time when things seem like they are returning a little closer to normal, it's important to be aware of how these transitions might be affecting your mental-emotional health and that of those around you. This transition back to social and in-person interactions and responsibilities may not be as smooth and easy for everyone.



Sometimes we might not realize we are struggling or could use some help until we find ourselves overwhelmed. Children and young adults especially may not be as keenly aware of how to recognize their own signs of stress. Experiencing struggles with sleep, feeling flooded more easily with anger or emotion, having new or recurring fears or anxieties, and having trouble concentrating are all signs that you or a loved one may be overly stressed. May is **Mental Health Awareness Month** and as State workers and as Californians, we are lucky to have many resources available to us to support our mental and emotional health.

Take time for yourself to relax and re-energize, check in on family and friends and even on those neighbors you know live alone. Sometimes just reaching out or offering help can make a world of difference. Look for the great resources we have on our Technology Resources page of this Newsletter (Page 3) and please share them with others. Not everyone knows where to look or that there is help out there for them. Most of all, it can be helpful to know that you and your loved ones are not alone-there are many struggling with these new situations and the long-term weight of the pandemic. Sometimes we all need to ask for a little help.



As we work so hard to keep our bodies healthy and to keep our community and loved ones safe, let's remember it is just as important that we take time to ensure our collective mental health as well.

I want to give a special shout out for Public Service Recognition Week (May2-8). Thank you for all you do. And as you venture out into the new open spaces, be kind to one another and stay safe out there.

Warmly,

Holly Howard

Contact Tracing Program Director

Training Updates

****All Trainings and Mentorship Summits Must Be Approved By LHJ and Your CT Supervisor Prior To Registering/Attendance****

NEW! Virtual Training Academy (VTA) Vaccine Communications for Case Investigators and Contact Tracers is a 4-hour online course conducted through Zoom for staff that are currently performing or will be performing vaccine coordination related activities. The live webinar will focus on interactive, small group activities. In order to maximize in-class time, ~2 hours of self-study is required prior to training. This course will teach staff how to...

- Provide concise and engaging answers to frequently asked questions about the safety, efficacy, availability, and access to COVID-19 vaccines.
- Identify individual and community-level barriers and enablers of vaccination, especially among communities most impacted by the pandemic.
- Apply principles of health coaching, motivational interviewing, and cultural humility to support individuals through different stages of vaccine acceptance, readiness, and action planning.
- Schedule vaccine appointments or provide education on how to schedule vaccine appointments using "My Turn" or other appointment systems.

Upcoming Dates: **May and June dates to be announced soon!** Supervisors will be receiving registration links to share with staff. Please check with your supervisor if you are interested in attending this course. ****LHJ and CT Sup Approval Required for Enrollment****

NEW! Offboarding, Appreciation, and Decompression Sessions

Weekly: Fridays, 3:00pm - 4:30pm - May 7, 14, 21 & 28 and June 4, 11, 18 & 25

We take this opportunity each week to acknowledge and thank the offboarding State redirected staff, hear about their experiences as CIs, CTs, or CTS', and discuss their thoughts and feelings about returning to their home units. ****You will receive a meeting request to attend this special meeting after you've received your notice of your last day****

NEW! CalCONNECT CI Refresher Skills Lab Weekly:

Wednesdays, 11:00am - 12:00pm - May 5, 12, 19, & 26 and June 2, 9, 16, 23 & 30

Each session's agenda is customized based upon the requests submitted during registration. Due to varying permissions and workflow across LHJs, NO supplemental or advanced functionality will be covered. However, LHJ-specific training can be requested.

****LHJ and CT Sup Approval Required for Enrollment****



NEW! Mentorship Straight Talk: A Peer-to-Peer Sharing Session

Weekly: Tuesdays, 2:30pm - 4:00pm - May 4, 11, 18 & 25 and June 1, 8, 15, 22 & 29

The CI/CT Mentorship Team hosts a weekly session to provide a platform for staff to discuss hot topics related to Covid-19 case investigation and contact tracing activities. At least three discussion topics are available each week. Topics rotate based on popularity, availability, and relevance.

****LHJ and CT Sup Approval Required for Enrollment****

Mentorship Summits: New Deployments - TBD: As Needed

A weekly summit to provide guidance and support to new CIs/CTs

Technology Resources



Mental Health Awareness Month - Helpful Links

Mental health includes our emotional, psychological and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make healthy choices. Mental health is important at every stage of life from childhood and adolescence through adulthood. As State workers we have some very good resources for you and we've also included several you can share with your family, friends or clients, that may find them useful.

Help Guide

<https://www.helpguide.org/home-pages/coronavirus-mental-health.htm>

Wellness Corner

<https://pandemic.ucsf.edu/wellness-corner-0>

Transition Resources for Redirected CI/CT Staff Returning to Home Departments:

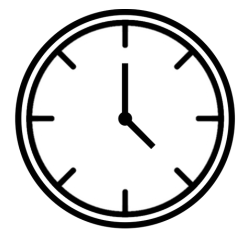
<https://docs.google.com/document>

CT/CI Program Timekeeping Portal

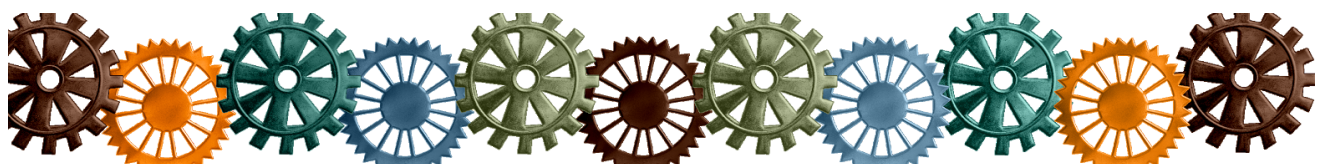
Now you can enter timesheets electronically!

Portal link: <https://cdphcontacttracers.powerappsportals.us/>

- Register for the portal using the registration link in your invite email
- Navigate to the Survey tab and complete all of the information requested
- Select current month and enter actual time worked for the CT program and document any time off taken
- Submit the completed CT timesheet on the last day of the pay period
- Your CT Supervisor will review and approve your time entries
- Remember to also submit a timesheet to your HD Supervisor, according to your HD procedures
- A copy of your approved CT timesheet will be sent to your HD Supervisor as a reference for approving your HD timesheet.



Portal support can be reached at the [Help and Support](#) Page or
ContactTracingPortalSupport@cdph.ca.gov

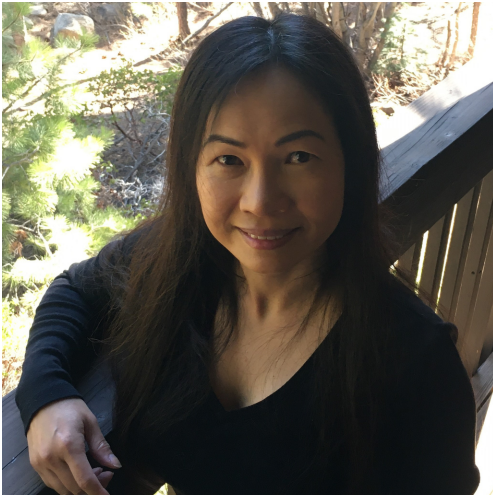


Staff Spotlights

We reached out to redirected staff to get a better idea about their experiences working with the California Connected Contact Tracing Program. Each month we'd like to highlight their responses, and share with you what it means to be part of such an important effort.

Tamara Tran is ready for some real hugs.

Tamara has 14 years of experience as a Legal Analyst with the California Department of Housing and Community Development. She has been working for California Connected as both a Contact Tracer and a Case Investigator assigned to Tulare County since August 2020.



What have you enjoyed during your experience as a Contact Tracer/Case Investigator?

It is a great privilege to be a valued member of such a dedicated team, I have enjoyed serving California's critical efforts to prevent the spread of COVID-19. I especially enjoy making connections with our cases and contacts to preserve livelihoods. The Language Line is an awesome tool in CalCONNECT. It has provided me the opportunity to converse with people from different languages seamlessly.

What has been your biggest challenge as a Contact Tracer/Case Investigator?

As a State redirect without a prior public health background, I was uncertain if I could perform the responsibilities of a Contact Tracer. I would have never expected myself to be doing this, but my challenge was really mind over matter. Prior to making my first call, I took advantage of all the additional resources offered; I sought guidance from Tulare County, and was encouraged by the advice and recommendations of State supervisors. I quickly realized that what I thought was a challenge was simply a new opportunity.

What have your friends and family thought about your work as a Contact Tracer/Case Investigator?

My friends and loved ones have been thrilled about my new path. Given the unprecedented times of the pandemic, they understand how essential collective action and responsibility are to fostering a community around a common goal. They are proud with the role I play in assisting numerous individuals and communities.

What are you looking forward to when things get back to normal?

At first, it was interesting having family gatherings over Zoom but I can't wait to give everyone a big hug and squeeze my little nieces and nephews' cheeks!

Staff Spotlights

Russel Citlau keeps Yolo County parks enjoyable for all of us.

I started state service in 1999 for CA State Parks, the last 15 years as Facility Manager for the State Parks in Sonoma and Mendocino County. My first assignment was on the Grapevine at Hungry Valley SVRA as a maintenance mechanic, then as a maintenance supervisor in Marin County. Before I came to State Parks, I was an industrial electrician for an Aerospace manufacturing company. It has been an incredible career and offered my wife and I an opportunity to raise our four kids in some of California's best State Parks.



What have you enjoyed during your experience as a Contact Tracing Supervisor?

I've enjoyed meeting and getting to know the state redirects on my Team from various departments and professional backgrounds and the Staff from Yolo County and CDPH. Everyone on the Team knows how important this work is and the real impacts it has on our greater communities it will have. The State of CA is lucky to have such dedicated and professional employees at both the county and state levels, and I feel fortunate to be a part of their Team.

What has been your biggest challenge as a Contact Tracing Supervisor?

Early in the assignment, it was a challenge to pivot from one set of job skills to the world of Public Health. There was a lot to learn quickly and competently in a short amount of time to help stand up a Team for Yolo County. But there was a lot of support from the CDPH redirect Team, Yolo county staff, and the other state redirect CT Supervisors who helped showed me the ropes.

What have your friends and family thought about your work as a Contact Tracing Supervisor?

My friends and family have been very supportive and interested in my CS role. This is a historical event that has affected everyone's lives in some larger or small way, and they think it's great that I'm able to be a part of the statewide effort.

What are you looking forward to when things get back to normal?

First, I'm interested in what the new normal will look like. I'm looking forward to traveling with my family and doing all the "normal" things we did just a year ago. Like many families, it has been difficult not to spend time with older family members that are at higher risk to COVID-19; the kids miss spending time with their Grandparents, so family visits are going to be a priority. Beyond that, I'm excited about getting back into the community and interacting with people without fear or concern for each other's health.

Staff Spotlights

Nancy Torres-Mancia has a passion for investigating.

During my undergrad at CSULB, I interned for DCA, Medical Board and instantly knew I wanted to become an investigator. Fast forward to 4 years later, a Master Degree in Legal Studies and a whole lot of passion, I became a Special Investigator for the Department of Consumer Affairs. My home department is DCA, Bureau of Household Goods and Services. On December 14, 2020 my journey as a Contact Tracer for Imperial County began. On January 2021, I became a Case Investigator for Imperial County and have loved every minute of it. Saying "Yes" to this temporary assignment has been one of the best decisions I have made in my career. Imperial County is truly one of a kind. I look forward to serving in this program until it is time to go back to my home department.



What have you enjoyed during your experience Case Investigator?

The gratification of helping people has been one of the most enjoyable things I have experienced as a CI. Not only have I been able to help people in my LHJ, but I have also helped people close to me. I have been able to pass along knowledge from studies, doctors, and courses I have taken to prepare me for this position. Helping California stay safe among this pandemic is one of the most selfless and fulfilling experiences of my life. Being a CI in a county where the majority of residents are non-native English speakers has helped me find my purpose during this entire pandemic: I am able to utilize my cultural background and professional experience to serve people that are distrustful of "the government" and negligent on topics that are lifesaving.

What has been your biggest challenge as a Case Investigator?

My biggest challenge as a CI has been... getting cases to provide me with people they had contact with during the time they were likely contagious. At first it felt like I was reading off a persuasive speech to try and get them to share this information. After a few friends and relatives close to me suffered from COVID-19, I was able to sympathize and change my approach. I set the script aside and talked to them with an open mind and an open heart. It is also of paramount importance for cases to know WHY this information is important and explaining to them that they are protected by California's privacy laws.

What have your friends and family thought about your work as a Case Investigator?

My friends and family love what I do. They pick my brain every chance they get. It also doesn't hurt that I'm able to help them look for resources that may be applicable to them. They are pleased that someone they trust is involved in stopping the spread of COVID-19.

What are you looking forward to when things get back to normal?

TRAVELING. A million times traveling. I love to travel to different countries every year, twice a year if possible. I have visited over 25 countries and still have many many more on my bucket list. I look forward to a new normal where locals of those countries are safe and healthy and back to loving and despising tourism (haha) 😊

We Heard It Through The Grapevine.....

Enjoy Some Great CI/CT Stories Shared From the Field



Some Trust and Great Resources

This is a success story that shows the County has earned trust from people, and in this case, from members of a vulnerable population. I was assigned 2 cases who are members of the same household. When I reached one of the cases, I learned they were, at that moment, serving food from the family's business at the Flea Market. It was Saturday at 12:10, during lunch hour rush. The case expressed surprise because he and his mother had received a letter from the testing facility saying they had both tested negative. I explained why it was urgent for him and his family to stop serving food immediately, pack up and leave. I promised to get answers as soon as possible. A few minutes later, his sister called, understandably upset and confused: This was the family's sole source of income, and they had letters stating they were negative. Why did they have to leave? I explained how important it is to help stop the spread of COVID-19. If her brother and mother did turn out to be positive, by going home, they could help save lives. This was a genuinely loving conversation. We had an answer for the family within 2 hours: the testing facility sent the letter in error. By then they had been home for about an hour, some in isolation, others in quarantine. They were obviously disappointed, but willing to do what was required. Because the family only had about 2 days worth of food, I put in a resource referral, and they now have the resources needed. Our resource coordinators are the unsung heroes in our efforts, and it is terrific to witness what they do. As a volunteer CI/CT since July, I get to work with amazing families every day. This family was one of them. Thank you for allowing me to do this work.

Never Too Late for a Christmas Story

I called a case on Christmas eve: she was sick with a lot of symptoms. When I went over the isolation and safety process she said "I am in isolation in my car, I have been homeless, I don't know what to do; she cried!" I called the resource coordinator at 4pm trying to get emergency housing for the patient. Before 5pm, she called to tell me that they managed to get her into a hotel and someone gave her dinner. That was her first time eating a hot plate of food at a real table and chair setting; she got a place to stay through the New Year and was on a wait list to get emergency housing. She said "I am so thankful to the entire organization for putting together all these different programs to help me....."

In Case You Missed It

BY THE NUMBERS AS OF 5/04/2021

Stats & Figures About
the Contact Tracing Program

2,182

REDIRECTED STAFF

1,894

DEPLOYED STAFF TO
AN LHJ

37

COUNTIES WITH
DEPLOYED STAFF

COUNTY WITH THE
MOST DEPLOYED
STAFF:

Los Angeles (823)

COUNTY WITH THE
LEAST DEPLOYED
STAFF:

Riverside (3)



Keeping Our Families and Communities Healthy

Tools & Resources

California Connected is dedicated to outfitting redirected staff with the tools they need and the training to use those tools effectively. Some examples include:

[Release Update](#) - Review this video to learn about the latest updates to the CalCONNECT platform, including feature enhancements, new entry fields, and permissions updates

[SPOT for Outbreak Investigators](#) - Learn about key functionality available to Outbreak Investigators when working with the School/Shared Portal for Outbreak Tracking (SPOT).

Find more great information and tutorials on the [CDPH CalCONNECT Learning YouTube playlist here.](#)

Maintaining a Healthy Work-Life Balance....After

As the light at the end of the pandemic tunnel grows brighter, Californians are beginning to see the ways we can bring joy, relaxation, and a sense of regularity back to our lives. However, for those of us working from home, we are also beginning to see how different our work-life balance will be upon returning to the office. For many of us, the way we work has changed a lot over the last year - pets comforting us after a difficult call, folding a load of laundry during a team meeting, enjoying a 30-second commute, playing with our children during our lunch breaks. We have had the opportunity to make work fit into our lives, and may now feel we have to make our lives fit into our work. While this may sound scary, we encourage you to start thinking about how you can maintain a healthy work-life balance when your time to return comes. As British philosopher Alan Watts said, "The only way to make sense out of change is to plunge into it, move with it, and join the dance." So look forward to the joy and the relaxation, but don't forget to dance!

(See Technology Resources, page 3 for great Mental Health resources)

ANY Questions or concerns about your CT/CI work? Our HR Policy Team is here to support you--do not hesitate to contact CTSupervisors@cdph.ca.gov for any questions or concerns about your work as a Contact Tracer/Case Investigator working at a local health department. We are here to support you!



*How are we doing? Let us know how we can improve this newsletter by completing our survey [here](#).
Thank you!*